



This Old Column

Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission

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Historic Cumberland becomes city's 15th locally protected district

On December 21, 2005 the Department of Metropolitan Development approved a resolution creating a conservation district within the Town of Cumberland. The historic community on the city's far Eastside became the 15th locally protected district by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission (IHPC).

The designation comes after months of planning and collaboration between IHPC planners and Cumberland town leaders and residents. The incorporated Town of Cumberland straddles the eastern edge of Marion County and the western edge of Hancock County, however the conservation district is entirely contained within Marion County.

The conservation district designation allows the IHPC to protect buildings and structures from demolition, review plans for rehabilitation and new construction, and oversee the planning process through the administration of rezoning and variance petitions. A "conservation district" plan differs from a "historic district" plan in that it focuses more on conserving the overall character of a community than on the specific architectural elements of individual buildings.

Local designation not only protects historic resources within a community, but also establishes strategies for improving neighborhood quality of life. The Cumberland Conservation Plan includes recommendations for revitalizing commercial corridors along East Washington Streets and encourages more mixed-use development to support additional neighborhood-type retail.

Founded in 1831, Cumberland's history is largely tied to the expansion of transportation along America's National Road (now U.S. 40). The town historically has been a stopover for travelers seeking services along the National Road and became a major transportation hub in Indiana. Now suburban-style development is impacting the town's historic integrity. In 1999, Cumberland was listed on the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana's "10 Most Endangered," which lists Hoosier landmarks in jeopardy.